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Adolescent Health Care Informational Forum and Public Hearing

Of the many dimensions pertaining to adolescent health, parental notification is one important way we can help to support and treat adolescents in their reproductive health needs. I had an abortion at the age of 15. Over the years, I have dealt with feelings of being unloved, unworthy, inadequate, shame, sadness, grief, and anxiety. Yet I portrayed a confident, independent, self-sufficient young woman in high school graduating summa cum laude with an athletic scholarship to college.

I became pregnant at 15 because I equated love and sex as synonymous. I never thought I would get pregnant. I had an abortion because I was afraid, ashamed, confused, and embarrassed. I never wanted my parents to know I was sexually active. My dreams of college would end with this baby; my life was ruined. I convinced myself abortion was the only answer and life would go back to normal. I was so wrong!

No one was there to hold my hand and console me. Tears were streaming down my face while the sucking sound of the machine was tearing my child into tiny pieces to fit into the jar on the floor. The pain and cramping were so intense. It seemed like an eternity before it was over but the actual abortion takes only minutes. They never explained the procedure and the risks to me – death, breast cancer, endometriosis, infertility, sterility, hemorrhaging, and physical and emotional pain. I was in a vulnerable state and needed my mom, and yet strangers were helping me to kill my child. I never told my parents about my abortion in high school.

Denial began immediately. I went to my formal homecoming dance the night of my abortion. I experienced suicidal thoughts in high school, depression, intense sadness, separation anxiety, poor male relationships later in adulthood. I became a workaholic. I never drank or took drugs as many post-abortive women do. I received counseling in college and as an adult. I punished myself for years. Christmas and Mother's Day were filled with overwhelming sadness, grief and anxiety. My healing included reconciling with

God, returning to Church, and acknowledging my child by giving him a name, Peter, and giving him back to God. I finally forgave myself after many years.

Later in life, I had a career, success, and a home - and yet I was empty. I wanted a child. It's ironic, I just wanted to be loved and accepted at 15 and yet I chose physical death for my child and emotional/spiritual death for myself. When I finally did marry in my 40's, we very much wanted to have children. I had surgery and fertility injections, all in the hopes of conceiving. However, scarring, endometriosis and my age would be my enemies. The bottom line for me was that I was never able to conceive again or to have children. And I am not alone. (Many women are unable to conceive after an abortion during their teen years or experience miscarriages more frequently and have to endure more grief as an adult.)

No one ever told me I might never have another child. I may have made a different decision. I wasn't mature enough and far too young to consider the consequences and how it would affect my future. My parents should have known about my pregnancy and abortion. They would not have been happy about my pregnancy but we would have gotten through it! They would have had more clarity and wisdom and could have helped me to choose a better alternative such as adoption. Their grandchildren and my entire family's legacy were affected by a "simple" procedure that was supposed to help me. You just don't know what life has in store for you at 15. Suffering infertility at the hands of abortion has been the most painful. I grieved the loss of my child and my fertility at different points in my life separated by almost 20 years. It is still a hard cross to bear but one that I must tell others about! *What a devastating choice!! I will regret my abortion for the rest of my life!*

It's ironic that we won't give our children an aspirin at school or use tanning beds without parental consent and yet, for abortion, a surgical procedure that clearly stops a beating heart (that starts beating in the third week of pregnancy) *NO* parental consent is required. It defies understanding and is completely illogical. Parental notification laws protect young women from themselves!

My mother wishes a law existed that would have helped me. As a 15 year old who thought she was mature, I shouldn't have made decisions concerning others' lives. My family and I are as much a victim of abortion as was my child. Our State should be concerned about the long-term effects abortion has on our children and families. Another young woman should not have to experience the emotional pain and devastation of abortion, the loss of a child and infertility.

Parental notification might not save all young women from abortion but it will save many who are ashamed to tell their parents like me. I believe it's worth helping them and saving them. Connecticut's young women deserve better from us and parental consent will protect them and our future!